



“For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you, with the simplicity and sincerity of God, (and) not by human wisdom but by the grace of God.”

(St. Paul, 2 Cor. 1:12)

Article 6 of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, mandates: “There are to be clear and well-publicized diocesan/eparchial standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other paid personnel and volunteers of the Church in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people.” This document is the Diocese of Fort Worth’s response to this mandate and is one of the cornerstones of our Safe Environment Program. All clergy, religious, and lay ministers (employees and volunteers) indicate their agreement with and adherence to the Code of Conduct by signing and dating it.

Professional Ethical Obligations

1. Ministerial Role

- a) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers work collaboratively with all those engaged in ministry.
- b) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers faithfully represent the teachings of the Catholic Church, with integrity in word and action.
- c) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers are competent and receive ongoing education and training commensurate with their role(s) and responsibilities (§ 231 and 279, Code of Canon Law).

2. Inclusion

- a) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from actions or words that are disrespectful of anyone.
- b) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers serve all people in accordance with the Church’s teaching on Faith and Morals.
- c) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers ensure that all persons have reasonable access to the resources, services, and opportunities they require with particular regard for persons with special needs or disabilities.

3. Accountability

- a) Priests are accountable to His Excellency, Bishop Vann, or the person or persons he designates; all other ministers are accountable to the pastor or other duly appointed representative under the authority of the Bishop.
- b) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers are called to serve the Faithful, carrying out their ministerial functions “...conscientiously, zealously, and diligently” (§ 231, Code of Canon Law).
- c) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers exercise responsible stewardship of resources while holding themselves to the highest standards of integrity regarding the fiscal matters placed in their trust.
- d) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers are responsible for supporting each other toward being effective leaders. This support must include discussing concerns about inappropriate behavior with one’s supervisor.

4. Confidentiality

- a) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers respect confidentiality.
- b) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers adhere to civil and ecclesial law concerning the reporting of neglect or abuse or whenever physical harm could come to the person or to a third party.
- c) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers support the rights and roles of parents, guardians and caretakers, as prescribed by the Church in the Code of Canon Law, while ministering to the needs and concerns of those receiving ministry.

5. Conduct

- a) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers will sustain respectful relationships with all those they serve, avoiding manipulation, sexual harassment and other abuses of the power that come with a ministerial position.

- b) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers maintain appropriate professional boundaries with colleagues. Romantic or sexual relationships between a minister and those whom he/she ministers to are inappropriate and unethical, regardless of who initiates the conduct.
- c) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers are to model healthy and positive behaviors with all those receiving ministry.
- d) Procuring, providing, or using alcohol for persons under 21 years of age and procuring, providing, or using controlled substances for anyone is illegal, inappropriate and unethical.

6. Referrals and Intervention

- a) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers are to be aware of the signs of sexual abuse and physical neglect.
- b) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers are aware of their limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and make appropriate referrals.
- c) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers adhere to civil and ecclesial law, policies and procedures for reporting abuse, suspected abuse or neglect.

7. Parish/School/Organizational/Diocesan Policies and Guidelines

- a) Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers are to be aware of and comply with all applicable parish/school, organizational and/or diocesan policies and guidelines with special attention to ministerial competency, sexual misconduct, safety, transportation, parental permission, and medical emergency policies.

Behavior Standards

1. Any interpersonal conduct that is prohibited by civil law is likewise forbidden under diocesan policy. As a prime example, any verbal or nonverbal sexual behavior between a minister and a child or young person is inappropriate and forbidden. Further, illicit use of electronic media, whether through the internet, email, chat rooms, social networks, phone conversations, text messaging, photos, videos or any other access, is expressly included in this prohibition.
2. All suspicion of sexual abuse must be reported as required by state law and diocesan policy. Any knowledge or reasonable suspicion of any minister having an inappropriate relationship with a child or young person must be reported promptly to that person's supervisor, who must then discuss this concern with the minister.
3. Two adults or one adult and two teens must be present at all children's and/or youth religious education programs, classes and activities, and must remain until all children/youth have left the premises. This requirement includes all *jovenes* (Spanish youth) ministries that include adolescents. All planning meetings/ interactions with a teen assistant/helper must take place in public or in the presence of another adult or teen. All Catholic school events and activities outside of a regular classroom setting require the presence of two adults or one adult and at least two teens. Going out/Dating between a minister and a child or young person is not allowed.
4. When initiating physical contact, discretion must be used. Any display of affection should be made in a public setting in front of other group members and should respect the wishes of the other person.
5. One-to-one counseling between a minister and those he/she ministers to should always occur in a public place where they can be observed by others—never alone in a car or a private place.
6. Driving alone with a child and/or youth is to be avoided at all times unless extraordinary circumstances require immediate and prudent action. In such situations, special care should be taken, including all of the following:
 - ✓ Contact parents and document the outcome of the call.
 - ✓ Do not sit close to one another in the car.
 - ✓ Do not come into physical contact with each other.
 - ✓ Do not stop the car to talk.
 - ✓ If you must stop, turn on the inside light of the car.
 - ✓ Avoid physical contact (hugs and kisses) when saying goodbye.
 - ✓ Be aware of the time you depart and arrive and make a record of those times.
7. If a minister experiences a recurring romantic or sexual attraction for someone they are ministering to, the minister is required to discuss the situation with their supervisor or spiritual director for guidance.
8. Any sexual gestures or overtures made to a minister, from those he/she ministers to, should be reported to his/her supervisor who will then meet with those involved to discuss the incident.
9. All observed Code of Conduct violations must be reported to the supervisor and documented.
10. Any Clergy, Religious or Lay Minister who cannot maintain these Behavior Standards cannot serve in the Diocese.

Unacceptable Behaviors

- ✓ Speaking graphically about sexual activities (including your own) and/or allowing others to do so (this includes telling sexually suggestive jokes)
- ✓ Hosting parish or school events for children or youth in your home without at least one other adult present
- ✓ Showing pornographic materials (photos, films, cartoons, stories, and drawings) to others
- ✓ Allowing anyone to become sexual with you or with another
- ✓ Spanking, shaking, slapping, wrestling, tickling or physically punishing children or youth
- ✓ Giving, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol
- ✓ Giving, possessing or being under the influence of illegal drugs
- ✓ Giving persons tobacco products
- ✓ Shaming, degrading, ridiculing, threatening, belittling, or humiliating another person
- ✓ Using foul or abusive language
- ✓ Showing favoritism
- ✓ Going out/Dating a child or young person
- ✓ Having physical contact with another that can be misinterpreted
- ✓ Wearing provocative or revealing attire
- ✓ Being nude in front of others
- ✓ Being in bed with children or youth
- ✓ Keeping “secrets” about relationships
- ✓ Showing affection when no one else is around or in bedrooms, closets, restricted areas and other private rooms
- ✓ Staring while others are dressing
- ✓ Commenting on others’ bodies
- ✓ Taking pictures or video/digital recording while others are dressing or showering
- ✓ Failing to adhere to uniform or accepted standards of affection

Warning Signs

- ✓ Wearing special clothes when you know you’re going to see a certain person
- ✓ Spending extra time grooming yourself when you know you are going to see a certain person
- ✓ Finding ways or reasons to be alone with a certain person
- ✓ Keeping aspects of your relationship with a person secret from others (such as how often you talk on the phone or see each other alone)
- ✓ Giving and receiving special gifts from a certain person
- ✓ Neglecting ministry to others in order to spend more time with a certain person
- ✓ Sharing personal information about others with a certain person
- ✓ Sharing personal information or seeking help with personal problems from a certain person
- ✓ Discussing adult issues with children and/or youth
- ✓ Excessively looking forward to seeing a certain person
- ✓ Fantasizing or daydreaming about a certain person

Displays of Affection

Appropriate

- ✓ Asking permission before touching
- ✓ Side hugs (with adults)
- ✓ Brief shoulder to shoulder hugs
- ✓ Pats on the shoulder or back
- ✓ Handshakes
- ✓ “High-fives” and hand slapping
- ✓ Verbal praise
- ✓ Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms
- ✓ Arms around shoulders
- ✓ Holding hands during prayer or when a person is upset
- ✓ Holding hands while walking with small children
- ✓ Sitting close to small children
- ✓ Kneeling or bending down for hugs with a small child

Inappropriate

- ✓ Any form of unwanted affection
- ✓ Full frontal hugs or “bear hugs”
- ✓ Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas
- ✓ Massages
- ✓ Patting others on the thigh, knee or leg
- ✓ Tickling or wrestling
- ✓ Touching or hugging from behind
- ✓ Games involving inappropriate touching
- ✓ Kisses on the mouth
- ✓ Special gift giving to/from a certain person

Violations of the *Code of Conduct & Behavior Standards for All Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers* are grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. All Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers of the Diocese of Fort Worth are to sign the *Code of Conduct Agreement Form*. Failure to agree in writing with this Code of Conduct is also grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

I have read and I understand the *Code of Conduct & Behavior Standards for All Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers*.

I will commit to uphold this **Code** in my ministry.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please keep this copy for your personal records. The companion document, *Code of Conduct Agreement Form*, is an integral piece of diocesan compliance for the *Charter of the Protection of Children and Young People*. When you first attend the Keeping Children and Youth Safe session, you will be required to sign and submit this agreement form to the location of your primary ministry. The primary location for clergy is the Chancery Office. The primary location for employees of the Diocese is their primary place of employment. For volunteers, the primary location is where they designate as their primary location.